



# ELECTION 2022

## VOTE — and Participate — Like Everything Depends on You!\*

*\*(It Does)*



The weather was perfect for Cheryl Jones-Williams, Para Chapter Chair (left), and MML Ruth James-Dickens at the 2022 Election Campaign literature drop. Hope to see you at the next one!

“We’ve heard it before, ‘this is the most important election season,’ but this time is key — these elections will determine the direction of our democracy,” said CTU President Shari Obrenski.

“We are counting on CTU members like you to help with phone banking, labor walks, literature drops, and other campaign activities in support of our endorsed candidates,” said David Quolke, former CTU President and CTU’s 2022 Election Coordinator.

“CTU members are well known for their political activism and participation,” he added. “We’re in the final sprint to Election Day, and our candidates need your help now. Elections always have consequences. But especially this year, not just in Ohio but across the country, the consequences of these elections could last for years, for better or worse.”

Mr. Quolke is back with CTU

to work with Shauntina Thornton, CTU Legislative Committee Chairperson, and Cindy Antonio, CTU Trustee and Director of Member Mobilization, on labor’s 2022 election campaign. They will coordinate CTU activities with the OFT and Cleveland’s North Shore AFL-CIO Federation of Labor. Kurt Richards, CTU 2nd Vice President and COPE Director, has been tapped to work with the Ohio AFL-CIO.

“When you see a notification or get a request from one of the CTU MMLs about a campaign activity, please get involved,” urged Ms. Antonio. “The strength of a union lies in its members — we need your help in

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CTU members, use this QR code to sign up for CTU 2022 campaign activities! Help us elect union and educator-friendly candidates in November.

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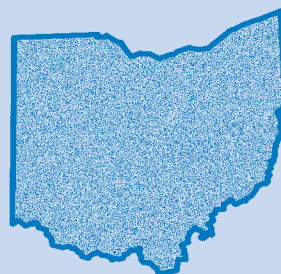
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## Just The Facts: Voting in Ohio in 2022



Make sure your voice is heard this year!

**October 11 is the deadline for Voter Registration for the November 8 General Election.** Go to the official website of the Ohio Secretary of State at [www.ohiosos.gov](http://www.ohiosos.gov) to check your registration and make any necessary changes. If you are not registered to vote, register today to make sure you can vote this November.

The Ohio Secretary of State has purged thousands of Ohioans from the list of registered voters over the last few years. Are you sure you’re registered? Double check your registration status to make sure you are still registered to vote, and that your address is correct. (It only takes a moment — take out your phone and do it right now! [www.ohiosos.gov](http://www.ohiosos.gov)) You can register to vote or update your registration online, including updating your address if you have moved.

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“Join us next weekend!” Shari Obrenski and David Quolke — CTU Presidents, current and former — prepare for a Labor Walk. Scan the QR code above to find a CTU campaign activity for you.

# THUMBS UP, THUMBS DOWN



**THUMBS UP** to **Kimberly Hill, CMSD Payroll Supervisor**, for consistently going above and beyond to help CTU members with their payroll questions and problems. Her professionalism and consideration when dealing with CTU members (and officers) is phenomenal and deserves recognition. Thank you, Ms. Hill!



**THUMBS UP** to **CTU members** who participated in the **Summer Learning Experience**, helping to provide valuable — and fun — additional learning opportunities for our students.



**THUMBS DOWN** to the **Ohio Legislature and Governor DeWine** for passing and signing HB 99, the new law allowing teachers to carry firearms in Ohio classrooms, if their districts approve. More guns is not a solution. Thankfully, the Cleveland Board of Education wisely decided that employees who are not safety and security officers will not be armed in our schools.



**THUMBS UP** to **those who assisted in getting our new CMSD-CTU contract books printed and distributed**. The books contain the 2021-2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, and according to Director of Negotiations Mary Moore, a very comprehensive and useful index. She recommends adding this book to your fall reading list.



**THUMBS UP** to the new **Community, College, and Career Center (CCCC) Coordinators** who are taking on a newly-developed role this fall in PreK-8 schools. Along with their CCCC counterparts in the high schools, they will help make CMSD media centers welcoming educational hubs for students, staff, and families.



**THUMBS DOWN** to **political extremists who are endangering our democracy** with false conspiracy theories, lies, and dangerous violent rhetoric. Being in a democracy means acknowledging that elections have winners and losers, and accepting the results. “If I win, it was fair, but if I lose, there was cheating,” is not the way democracy works. It is poisoning our politics and polarizing our nation.



**THUMBS UP** to **CTU members who volunteer for CTU election campaign activities**. Please join us in at least one (but hopefully more than one) activity this election season — we need you! And thumbs up to our endorsed candidates — support them with your vote in the November election. The complete list is on the OFT and CTU websites.



**THUMBS DOWN** to the **nationwide teacher and school staff shortage**, which contributes additional stress and burnout for already-spread-thin school personnel. For many reasons — including austerity budgets, the pandemic, and politicized attacks — the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and fewer young people are going into teaching. We’re doing better in CMSD: school staffing is at 98.3%, meaning fewer substitutes will be needed for long-term positions and more should be available for day-to-day needs.



**THUMBS UP** to the **AFT’s efforts to address the teacher and school staff shortage**. The new issue of American Educator lays out practical solutions and ambitious recommendations from the AFT Teacher and School Staff Shortage Task Force; CTU President Shari

Obrenski was a member of the task force. They developed a plan and vision for a new era of education: one in which educators and school staff are appropriately compensated, educators have a stronger voice, and public schools are safe and welcoming with the resources needed to meet the needs of all students. Read the report on the AFT website, [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org).



**THUMBS UP** to **Eric Gordon**, who has led CMSD as its CEO for 11 successful years. Under his leadership, CMSD has earned national attention for its academic growth. He views CTU members as educational partners, not problems. He has developed collaborative working relationships with our union leaders through some difficult times. Working together with educators and the entire community, he helped make the Cleveland Metropolitan School District Ohio’s highest performing large urban district. We wish him another successful school year in Cleveland, and much success wherever he goes. Thank you, CEO Gordon.

It bears repeating: Cleveland Metropolitan School District is Ohio’s highest performing school district of the eight large urban districts!

**THUMBS UP AND THANK YOU** to CTU teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, and related service providers who helped achieve that rating. Thank you also for what that success means for Cleveland children.



## Wanted: CTU Website Manager

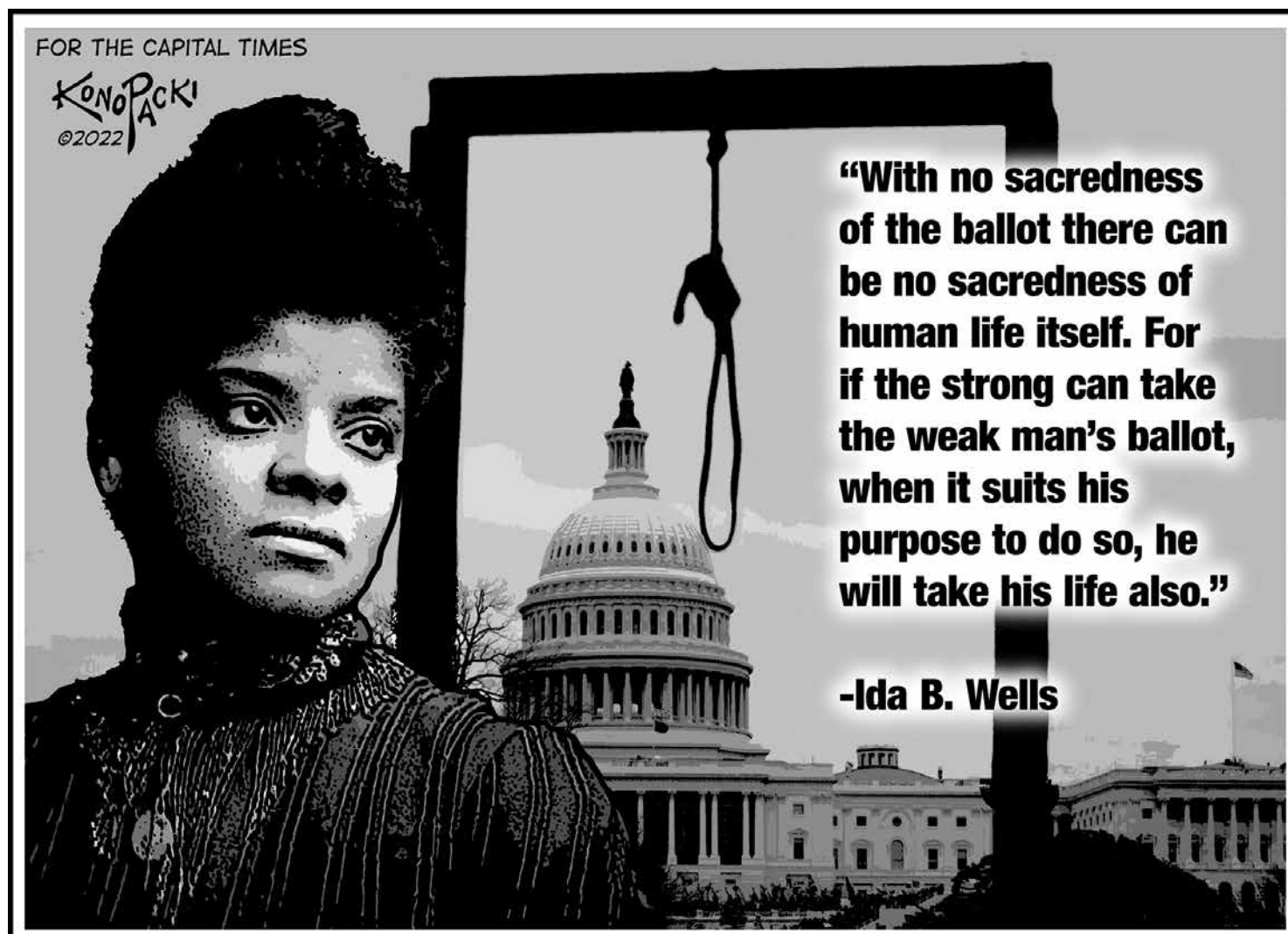
Are you a tech-savvy CTU member? Would you like to get more involved with your union?

If you answered yes to both questions, we have an opportunity for you! The CTU is looking to hire a website manager for our website [www.ctu279.org](http://www.ctu279.org).

This position is appointed by the CTU President and qualifies for stipends each month. Responsibilities include:

- Familiarizing yourself with Union Active (we have training videos and paperwork to help with this)
- Managing the home page and website layout
- Managing the calendar to inform members about CTU Committee workshops, CTU meetings, and other events for members
- Uploading recordings of virtual PD sessions
- Removing old/outdated content as necessary
- Other responsibilities pertaining to CTU website, as needed

If you are interested, apply at: <https://bit.ly/ctuwebmaster>



this election campaign.”

More information will be sent to chapter chairs and they will distribute it to members, Ms. Antonio explained. *[Note: members’ personal emails, not CMSD emails, must be used for political activities.]* Information about activities will be posted on the CTU website and Facebook page. CTU members are asked to fill out the interest form in President Obrenski’s September 16 email update.

“Once we get the list of what members want to do, it will be easier to reach out to specific people for each activity,” said Ms. Antonio. “We will need members to phone bank, fill out post cards, and do labor walks.”

“We educators are the professional advocates for our students,” said Ms. Thornton. “We showed it during the pandemic, and we show it every day in our schools. Now, we need to turn that advocacy into political action, from now through November 8. Please join us in our campaign activities!”

Shauntina Thornton is the CTU point of contact for any questions about CTU election activities. Contact her at [sthornton@ctu279.org](mailto:sthornton@ctu279.org) using your personal email.

## Education and Workers’ Rights on the Ballot

The last few years have been tough for public schools. Significant challenges have made it harder for educators to do their jobs.

“Now, more than ever, we need elected officials who will come to work every day with the goal of solving problems and bringing people together,” stated Darold Johnson, OFT Director of Legislation. “Unfortunately, too many Ohio politicians have sought to advance their careers by inflaming divisions in our communities, placing unwarranted blame on public schools, and making it harder for teachers to

teach and for students to learn.”

That’s why your union is asking you to make your voice heard! First, make sure you are registered, and then VOTE for our endorsed candidates who support educators and public education. The list of endorsed candidates is available on the OFT website, [www.oft-aft.org](http://www.oft-aft.org), and the CTU website, [www.ctu279.org](http://www.ctu279.org).

## How Endorsements Are Made

OFT endorsements are based on the candidates’ responses to an OFT candidate questionnaire, and for candidates who have held elected office, on their voting history and experience. All endorsements are approved by a majority vote of OFT’s Executive Council, which is made up of delegates from all OFT local unions.

Dues money is not used to support candidates. Political funds come from separate, voluntary donations to a union COPE (Committee on Political Education) Fund. If you are interested in contributing to CTU’s COPE fund, contact Shauntina Thornton at [sthornton@ctu279.org](mailto:sthornton@ctu279.org).

## Our Candidates

**Tim Ryan** has consistently been on the side of educators and working people during his 20 years in Congress. He has supported investments in public education, opposed trade deals that hurt Ohio workers, and advocated for passage of the PRO Act to make it easier for workers to form unions. OFT proudly endorsed **Tim Ryan for U.S. Senate**.

OFT also endorsed education champions for statewide office, including **Nan Whaley for Governor**, **Jeff**

# ELECTION 2022



CTU and North Shore AFL-CIO members engage in campaign activities. Make a plan to volunteer at least two hours this fall!

**Crossman for Attorney General, Taylor Sappington for Auditor, Scott Schertzer for Treasurer, and Chelsea Clark for Secretary of State.**

For Congress, the endorsed candidates in our area are **Marci Kap-tur (District 9), Shontel Brown (District 11), and Emilia Sykes (District 13)**, all steadfast supporters of labor, working people, and public education.

Few elected positions have as much of an impact on our day-to-day work as the State Board of Education. OFT made endorsements in three key State Board of Education races: **Teresa Fedor (District 2), Katie Hofmann (District 4), and Tom Jackson (District 10)**. These candidates with deep backgrounds in education will help reorient the State Board toward ensuring that Ohio’s students have safe and equitable learning environments. Ms. Hofmann and Ms. Fedor are also both OFT members.

As we’ve seen throughout the ongoing redistricting debacle, a healthy democracy in Ohio is dependent on a majority on Ohio’s Supreme Court

that believes in and is willing to defend democracy. We endorse **Justice Jennifer Brunner for Chief Justice** because she has been steadfast in upholding Ohio’s voter initiated redistricting reforms. We endorse **Judges Terri Jamison and Marilyn Zayas for Ohio Supreme Court**. They are both facing incumbents who repeatedly ignored the state constitution and the will of the voters for petty partisan gain.

On its website, OFT has a complete list of endorsed candidates statewide, including candidates for Ohio Senate and House races. The list will also be available on the CTU website when early voting begins on October 12, and the endorsement list will be sent out to schools. Please check the list when you vote, and support these candidates who will support you, your union, and public schools.

## Asking CTU Members...

Between now and November 8, the CTU has these asks of members: make a plan to vote, make a plan to get involved, and make a plan to participate in one or more of our CTU election activities.



## Your Union Membership Benefits

CTU members understand the importance of union membership: the Cleveland Teachers Union provides negotiated salaries, benefits, and working conditions, and guarantees member protections through the collective bargaining agreement and the grievance process.

“But your membership in the union includes much more,” explained Wendi Kral, CTU Membership Chairperson. The CTU provides many additional services and perks to members through its local committees, directors, activities, and programs. Membership in the CTU provides automatic membership in its national and state

affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and the Ohio Federation of Teachers.

### Extra AFT+ Benefits

Through the AFT, you are part of a community with its own marketplace, AFT+ Member Benefits, that combines the purchasing power of AFT’s 1.7 mil-

lion members with the benefit offerings of Union Plus, the AFL-CIO’s benefit branch. AFT+ provides a wide array of discounts, services, and benefits that go beyond the workplace. Many of these programs are available to your family members, too.

Ms. Kral encourages all CTU members to look into the AFT+ Member Benefits Program. The program provides discounts and special opportunities in the areas of education; finance and legal; health services; discounts and shopping; insurance; travel; and mortgages, auto, and home services.

AFT has added benefits to deal with members’ needs in this particular moment after the COVID-19 pandemic.

A valuable new benefit is free trauma counseling to support recovery from personal and workplace challenges. The program is free of charge to working members, in the one-year aftermath of a traumatic incident. You are covered 365 days a year if your incident includes: domestic violence, aggravated assault, sexual assault, mass shooting or terrorism, or if you are infected, injured, or traumatized by a disease during a major disaster. At work, you are covered if you are traumatized by being bullied, harassed, or threatened; experience a secondary trauma; witness a violent act; or contract an infectious disease. If you are unsure if your incident qualifies, you are encouraged to file a claim to find out.

Two other new programs are News-Guard, a program to help members discern fact from fiction online, and Summer, a service to help minimize student loan debt and repayments.

Do you need help with your student loans? Higher education? A competitive mortgage rate? No-fee credit cards? A great wireless plan? Discounts on travel opportunities? AFT+ has benefit programs for all of these, and more. For additional information, visit [www.aft.org/benefits](http://www.aft.org/benefits). If you have questions, email Ms. Kral at [wkral@ctu279.org](mailto:wkral@ctu279.org) or contact [aftplus@aft.org](mailto:aftplus@aft.org).



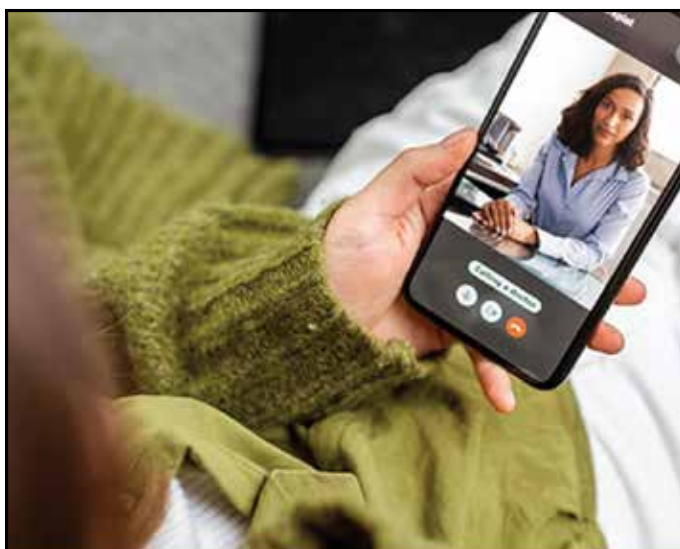
### Liability Insurance

“The liability insurance that AFT provides to its members is one of the best benefits our union members have,” said Ms. Kral.

The AFT provides liability insurance — up to \$1,000,000 — for qualifying claims and charges arising out of an educator’s employment activities. The Occupational and Liability Insurance plan is automatic for members in good standing, and provides broad protection for legal defense costs and court judgments.

### Union Membership = Many Benefits

“Your union is always here for you,” Ms. Kral reminded CTU members. “If you have problems at work, contact your chapter chair or UCC members. And you can always call the CTU office at 216-861-7676 for help. Your union membership guarantees you support on the job as well as many other benefits. Take advantage of all that comes with being a member of the Cleveland Teachers Union.”



### Trauma counseling

AFT's trauma counseling benefit provides help and healing for our members, whenever needed, wherever a member may be.

## Unions by the Numbers

### Support for labor unions is on the increase . . .

Percentage of Americans who say they approve of labor unions:

In 2009: 48%  
In 2022: 71%

### . . . but the number of workers who belong to a union has fallen.

Percentage of American workers who belong to a union:

In 1983: 20%  
In 2021: 10%

### Unions are stronger in the public sector . . .

Percentage of union workers in public vs. private sector in 2021:

Public sector: 33.9% (teachers, firefighters, police, etc.)  
Private sector: 6.1%

### . . . and stronger in blue states as opposed to red states. Many red states have so-called “right-to-work” laws that make it harder for unions to organize workers.

Percentage of union membership in 2021 in the two most unionized states (New York and Hawaii): Over 22%

Percentage of union membership in 2021 in the two least unionized states (North Carolina and South Carolina): Below 3%

[Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Gallup Survey, CNN News]

# SOLIDARITY FOREVER

## Why I'm A CTU Member . . . and an Executive Board Member



**Amy Such**  
*CTU Salary and Benefits  
Committee Chairperson*

**I am grateful to be a CTU member because of the strong, dynamic commitment of our union to members, students, our community, and public education.**

As a School Psychologist, I am honored to serve on the CTU Executive Board to continue the work of strengthening our members' professional experiences, building bridges of collaboration, and helping colleagues thrive in an ever-changing environment.



**Beverly Scott, R.N.**  
*CTU Nurses  
Chapter Chairperson*

**I am a CTU member because of the unity and support the union provides to its members — the union makes us strong!**

As an Executive Board member, I will be working together with CMSD and CTU leaders and CTU members for the health and safety of students, staff, and families. I will assist my nursing colleagues in getting the support and supplies we need to maintain our nursing practices and use our healthcare skills successfully.



**Rosa Cruz**  
*CTU Educational Issues  
Committee Chairperson*

**I am a CTU member because I believe in the Union.** I believe in what it stands for, the fight, the vision of creating an educational system not only for our staffs and members, but for our students as well.

I am an appointed member of the Executive Board and I am honored. Being part of the Board means my voice gets to be heard, and my voice represents many things and people. I am one of the youngest members on the Board, an encore teacher, and the first Hispanic/Latinx member. That is important to me because it shows that there is diversity and representation on our Executive Board and in the CTU.

## Student Loan Debt Info

# Public Student Loan Forgiveness Deadline: October 31

**October 31, 2022 is the deadline for federal student loan borrowers to get credit for loan payments that previously didn't qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) or Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness (TEPSLF).**

Under the limited PSLF waiver authorized by President Joe Biden, you can get credit for past payments even if you didn't make the payment on time, didn't pay the full amount due, or weren't on the right repayment plan.

Cindy Antonio, CTU Trustee, K-8, and CTU's point person for Public Service Loan Forgiveness, encouraged CTU members who qualify for the PSLF program to get their forms in on time to take advantage of this valuable opportunity to have their student loans forgiven, even some loans that did not previously qualify. There is a PSFL Help Tool on the StudentAid.gov website that can help you with the process.

If you have a type of student loan or repayment plan that does not qualify,

you must first consolidate your loans into a qualified loan. Consolidation is when any or all of your federal student loans are combined, giving you one monthly payment.

To verify that you work for a non-profit (CMSD), you will need to complete an Employee Verification Form. You will also need to submit an Income Verification Form.

Ms. Antonio explained that CMSD and CTU have been collaborating to establish links on the District's website and specific emails for employees to use to facilitate the loan forgiveness process. CMSD recently set up a new quick link for verifying employment and income information. The forms are available at CMSD

Home page>Departments> Human Resources > Employment and Income Verifications. Email your completed forms to both [LucittaCummings@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:LucittaCummings@clevelandmetroschools.org) and [EmployeeRelations@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:EmployeeRelations@clevelandmetroschools.org).

"But don't delay!" Ms. Antonio stated. "Don't wait until the last minute to complete and submit your PSLF form and apply for loan consolidation, if necessary. The process takes time, and the deadline is October 31, 2022. Don't miss your chance to use this one-time limited waiver to get your student loan debt forgiven."

### **CTU-Sponsored PSLF Workshops**

For CTU members with student loan debt, Ms. Antonio organizes monthly informational workshops on the PSLF program. These sessions have helped CTU members become more knowledgeable about student

loans and save significant amounts on their student loan debts.

Ms. Antonio is also available to answer individual questions about student loan issues after school hours. You can reach her by email at [cantonio@ctu279.org](mailto:cantonio@ctu279.org).

### **COVID-19 Forbearance Ends in 2023**

The COVID-19 emergency relief for federal student loans — the pause in loan payments — has been extended through December 31, 2022. From the beginning of the pandemic until December 31, 2022, borrowers have been able to suspend repayments with no penalties and no additional interest charged.

"Repayments will begin again in January 2023," Ms. Antonio said, "so be prepared to make your regular monthly loan payments after the new year."

# CTU Wellness Program Deadline: October 31

**CTU members: get your Wellness forms completed now! The deadline for submission of documentation is October 31, 2022, in order to qualify for lower premiums.**

The District recently transitioned from the Hylant Group to Oswald Companies for its healthcare advisement services. **This transition does not impact any healthcare benefits or services.** In addition to advisory services, Oswald Companies will process CMSD Wellness forms.

As a result of this transition, any Wellness Forms completed after July 1, 2022 must be sent to one of the addresses below. Forms completed and submitted prior to July 1, 2022 have already been processed and do not need to be submitted again. Note: All forms for 2023 eligibility need to be received by **October 31, 2022.**

The new addresses are:

■ By email: [CMSDHRA@oswaldcompanies.com](mailto:CMSDHRA@oswaldcompanies.com)

■ By U.S.P.S Mail:  
Oswald  
Attn: Group Benefits – CMSD  
1100 Superior Ave., Suite 1500

Cleveland, OH 44114

If you submitted a Wellness Form to Hylant in July, please send a copy of your form to one of the addresses above to ensure that they have your records processed. You do not need to have your doctor complete an updated form; sending the previously completed form will be processed and posted.

Wellness forms are available at <https://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/Page/6186>. For more information, go to [benefits@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:benefits@clevelandmetroschools.org).

### About the Wellness Program

CMSD's Wellness Program provides discounted health care premiums for employees who complete the annual wellness check requirements by the October 31 deadline.

The program requires eligible participants to complete certain activities in order to qualify for the lower

health care premiums. To qualify, the employee and covered spouse, if the spouse is covered as primary under a CMSD health plan, must submit an annual Physician Certification Form. The form certifies that member (and qualifying spouse) completed a screening/exam on or after November 1, 2021, that included at least a cholesterol screening, a glucose screening, a blood pressure screening, and a Body Mass Index (BMI). They must also complete and submit the CMSD Physician Health Risk Assessment to the medical practitioner.

Please note: The actual results, diagnoses and/or any other details of any testing or assessment are **not to be included** with the Physician Certification Form that the employee submits. Also, **do not** email the Health Risk Assessment form — that personal information is only for you and your doctor.

CTU advises that members email the completed certification forms themselves. Do not count on your doctor's office doing it for you! The correct

addresses (email and regular mail) are on the bottom of the current certification form. It is recommended that the employee and spousal forms be submitted together for the most expedited processing. If you have additional questions about the Wellness Program, contact Michelle Rzucidlo, CTU Secretary, at 216-861-7676 ext. 257.

### Take Care of Your Health — and Save Money

Preventive care is one of the most important steps you can take to maintain your health. Early detection can make all the difference in the severity of an illness, in the availability of possible treatments, and in the outcome. If you have delayed getting regular screenings and exams due to COVID-19 or any other reason, it's time to schedule them now.

If you haven't completed your forms, or made an appointment to see your health care provider, do it today! Don't delay — it could cost you money, and more importantly, your health.

# GRIEVANCE REPORT

## Overages, Compensation Errors Increase

The CTU Grievance Team wrapped up a greater-than-usual number of summer (June-August) grievances, reported Debbie Paden, Grievance Co-Director and 3rd Vice President, Senior/Special. "We saw a huge uptick in grievances, and almost every one dealt with compensation problems, such as class size overages, incorrect steps, wage errors, other pay issues." By contract, overage payments are to be processed by July 15.

The union filed two major class action grievances regarding the Summer Learning Experience, one about incorrect hiring for SLE positions, and another about substitutes not being

called by seniority. The union is waiting for arbitrator's responses on these.

Other SLE grievances that could not be included as part of either class action filing were presented by the

Grievance Team individually, resulting in a busy summer for Grievance Team members.

"CMSD and CTU have been meeting to work on the problems with overage payments," said Jillian Ahrens, Grievance Co-Director and 3rd Vice President, K-8. "The verification process is cumbersome, but the District wants to improve it. We are working together to identify problems and how to avert them in the future."

Another class action grievance was filed about the June 20 pay snafu. June 19 fell on Sunday, so the new Juneteenth federal holiday was officially celebrated on June 20 — and banks were closed. According to the contract, the CMSD payday should have been moved ahead to June 17, but instead some employees were paid on June 21. CTU members who were harmed by the late payday filled out a form, and remedy payments were made to grievants.

### Grievance 101

The CTU Grievance Team encourages every CTU member to **read the new contract book**. The CBA is also available on the CTU website, [www.ctu279.org](http://www.ctu279.org). If you think the contract is being violated, file a grievance. It's not personal — it's business. And it's your right as a union member.

Step 1 grievances are filed at the building level. Present the completed grievance to your principal or supervisor. They have three working days to respond. If they don't respond in three days, or if the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, complete a Step 2 Appeal form. Send the completed Step 1 form, all related paperwork and evidence, and the completed Step 2 Appeal form to [grievances@ctu279.org](mailto:grievances@ctu279.org). All grievance forms are available online at the CTU website.

"Be sure you have completed all parts of the grievance forms," added Ms. Paden. "Don't email incomplete grievances or leave out evidence — that delays the process. If you have questions, ask your chapter chair for help or call the CTU."

Both Ms. Paden and Ms. Ahrens warned CTU members "not to sit on money issues." Check your pay each pay period, and check overages and other compensation to be sure you have been paid correctly.

### CTU Grievance Team

The members of the CTU Grievance Team are: Co-Directors Jillian Ahrens, 3rd Vice President, K-8 and Debbie Paden, 3rd Vice President, Senior/Special; Mary Moore, 3rd Vice President, K-8; Cherylane Jones-Williams, Paraprofessional Chapter Chairperson; Cheryl Neylon, Sergeant-at-Arms; and Jim Wagner, K-8 Trustee.



**CTU Books, Membership Info, Leadership Retreat**

“The books — both new CBA and calendar books — have all been delivered to members,” reported Michelle Rzucidlo, CTU Secretary and Bargaining Unit Director. CTU Executive Board members and a few other helpers brought the contract books to the schools in August, and the popular CTU calendar books were sent to every site via school mail.

If your school did not receive enough of the books for all your members, contact Ms. Rzucidlo at the CTU office, 216-861-7676 ext. 257.

As part of her annual duties, the Bargaining Unit Director is in the process of updating the CTU membership list, so 2022-2023 membership cards can be issued to all members. Please help by making sure your contact information, including name, current address, phone number, and a **non-CMSD email address**, are all up-to-date. Since some union information is sent electronically, it’s important that the CTU has your correct contact information.

The CTU Leadership Retreat is back! “We are thrilled to be holding our first Leadership Retreat for CTU chapter chairs and Executive Board members in two years,” announced Ms. Rzucidlo. Exercising caution around COVID-19, the union did not hold its annual retreat in the fall of 2020 or 2021.

The two-day overnight retreat will be held at Geneva State Park and Lodge October 27-28. Ms. Rzucidlo and Jim Wagner, CTU Treasurer, are co-chairs of the event.

“After two years, we are excited to be back, live and in person,” added Ms. Rzucidlo. “The Leadership Retreat is important for CTU leaders at every level: for educational purposes, for sharing ideas, and for developing collegiality,” explained Ms. Rzucidlo. She urged chapter chairs to put in their request for a substitute now, if they haven’t already done so.



**Professional Issues**

**PowerSchool Transition Delayed**

The transition from eSchool to PowerSchool’s technology system for grade reporting experienced delays, causing confusion as the new school year began. “PowerSchool’s transition process was behind schedule, and not everything was in the system correctly at the beginning of the school year,” said Mark Baumgartner, CTU Director of Professional Issues. “But this was not a CMSD problem — the problem was with PowerSchool.”

According to Mr. Baumgartner, CEO Eric Gordon has had daily contact with high-level PowerSchool executives, working to fix problems and expedite the implementation process. And as of this printing, PowerSchool was ready for interims. The district has shared directions with teachers on the steps to input the interim scores.

“The PowerSchool Specialists were instrumental in assisting the district in making sure this process worked for CMSD,” explained Mr. Baumgartner. “I’d like to give a huge shout-out to Sara Baldassar from Memorial School who has taken the lead with the Professional Learning Communities and all the scheduling of office hours for the PowerSchool Specialists.”

To support teachers as they transition to the new software reporting system, the CTU will continue to offer virtual after-school help sessions, Monday through Friday from 3:00-6:00 p.m. through the first quarter of the school year. The sessions are staffed by 30 PowerSchool-trained support specialists — CTU members helping CTU members.

In addition, Mr. Baumgartner and Rosa Morales Cruz, CTU Educational Issues Chairperson, hosted two in-person drop-in training sessions for CTU members on August 23-24 at Max Hayes High School and East Professional Center.

“The CTU will be in ongoing weekly contact with the district regarding PowerSchool,” Mr. Baumgartner said, “to address any problems and ‘put out fires’ as we go. The union is trying to give as much support to our members as we have the capacity to do, to help them use PowerSchool.”

CTU members are encouraged to take advantage of the virtual support sessions if they need help with PowerSchool.

**News on Negotiations**

**“The new contract books have been printed and delivered to CTU members — now everyone needs to read it!” encouraged Mary Moore, CTU Director of Negotiations and 3rd Vice President, K-8. The contract book includes the current three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement, important tables, Memoranda of Understanding, and a comprehensive index.**

Members should refer to the Collective Bargaining Agreement if they have questions or concerns about something happening in their buildings, she added. “There’s a good index available in the book — use it.”

In other positive negotiations news, the union and district extended the MOU for CMSD’s COVID-19 hotline. **The number is 216-838-9355.** The hotline is available to all staff, but nurses especially should contact the hotline with any COVID-19 issues, to get the latest Health Department guidelines.

Ms. Moore thanked CTU members who took the time to thoughtfully participate in the union’s online surveys, especially the Working Conditions survey at the end of last school year. “Your candid, specific responses will help the CTU Negotiating Team set priorities for future negotiations — now only two short years away — and make appropriate decisions to improve teaching and learning conditions in our schools.”

**2022 TDES Changes**

The Teacher Development and Evaluation System (TDES) has a new portal for all CTU members, Jillian Ahrens, CTU’s TDES Co-Chair stated. TDES building teams have been trained, and are now training their staff members on using the portal.

Past TDES events are being loaded into the new system, but may not be accessible for several weeks.

The TDES Committee has revised rubrics for Planning Center Instructional Aides (PCIA’s), Community, College, and Career Center (CCCC) Coordinators, and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). Members in these job classifications will receive training on their new rubrics.

Ms. Ahrens advised any members who have TDES questions to contact the TDES Committee at [TDES@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:TDES@clevelandmetroschools.org).





CTU honored recent retirees at its annual Retiree Luncheon at Windows on the River.

# CTU Celebrates Retirees



Retiree Kathleen Brennan accepts the "class photo" and CTU gift.

Sherdina Williams, past CTU Nurses Chapter Chair, speaks with President Obrenski.



The event is sponsored by the CTU Social Committee, Cassandra Carter, chairperson.



James Cregar was one of several former chapter chairs recognized for their service to CTU.

Carmen Parker-Lyles is ready to enjoy her retirement after years teaching preschool children.



Congratulations to long-time Executive Board members, newly retired Pat Forrai-Gunter and Michael Kulcsar (third and fourth from left), pictured with CTU officers Dorothy Fair, Cindy Antonio, Shari Obrenski, Cassandra Carter, and Andrea Dockery-Murray.



Congratulations to CTU's Retiree Class of 2022!

**The CTU Social Committee honored 36 recent retirees and their guests at the annual CTU Retiree Luncheon on September 10 at Windows on the River.**

"Of all my duties with the Social Committee, hosting the Retirement Luncheon is my favorite," said Cassandra Carter, Social Committee Chairperson and Member-at-Large, K-8. "I love being able to recognize retired CTU members for their service to Cleveland children. And this is my last year as a host — I'm looking forward to attending the luncheon next fall as a new retiree!"

CTU President Shari Obrenski welcomed guests to the luncheon and congratulated retirees, acknowledging their years of work to educate

and care for CMSD students. She read Robert Fulghum's "All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." Andrea Dockery-Murray, CTU Trustee-at-Large, read a poem and Dorothy Fair, Trustee, Senior/Special, gave the invocation before lunch.

Following lunch, Hazel Hicks, President of CTU's retiree union affiliate chapter, NEO AFT 279-R, encouraged retirees to stay active in union activities by participating in the retiree chapter. CTU retirees receive a complementary first year of membership in 279-R.

Three Executive Board members, Treasurer and Bargaining Unit Director Michael Kulcsar and former Nurses Chapter Chairs Patricia For-

rai-Gunter and Sherdina Williams, were honored for their service to the CTU. Retirees who had served as CTU Chapter Chairs were also honored: James Cregar, Meg Ehlinger, Sandra Logan, Judy Miles, and Rudy Towns.

Retirees were called individually to receive personal congratulations from President Obrenski and Ms. Carter. Members of the Social Committee presented each retiree with a gift from the union: a crystal apple with blue laser-engraved CTU emblem.

The Cleveland Teachers Union extends its congratulations — and best wishes for long, healthy, happy retirements — to the members of the Class of 2022!

# School Founder & CEO Visits Planning Centers

by Lakisha Tuggle  
PCIA, William Rainey Harper

CMSD Planning Centers are known around the United States for successfully replacing a punitive-style concept with a Restorative Practice-centered approach. The CMSD Planning Center concept is based on creating a safe space where scholars have the opportunity to deescalate, reflect, and come up with appropriate strategies for the challenges that they are presented with daily.

Since the inception of CMSD's Planning Centers, school leaders across the country have visited Cleveland to "see how the magic unfolds" in Planning Centers. Last spring, select Planning Center Instructional Assistants (PCIA's) and administrators welcomed Bill Kent of St. Louis, Missouri's Biome School for tours and sit-down conversations centered around the importance of Social-Emotional Learning.

Mr. Kent and Patricia Tilow, CMSD Humanware Partner (Networks 2 & 4), joined William Rainey Harper's PCIA Lakisha Tuggle and Principal Dr. Ajayi Monell. The focus of their conversation included the importance of stakeholder buy-in. In order for a healing-centered environment to be successful, community partners, parents, scholars, and staff must collectively recognize and embrace the importance of a safe space like Harper's "Zen Den" (Planning Center).

While in Cleveland, Mr. Kent also

visited Garfield's Planning Center, facilitated by PCIA Larry Calhoun. Mr. Calhoun explained that as a successful PCIA, you must really buy into the concept yourself. You must also have a principal who buys into the Restorative Practice approach as well. The principal has to be your main support because you are literally working by yourself in the Planning Center. You must also have a strong presence about yourself as a PCIA.

The resounding message conveyed to Mr. Kent centered around team buy-in. It is important that all stakeholders are on the same page when implementing a therapeutic, non-punitive method. CMSD participants extended an open invitation to his team to visit again, so they can get a chance to experience our progressive approach first-hand.



## Paras and CMSD Summer Learning Experience

The second CMSD Summer Learning Experience program included opportunities for paraprofessionals from all classifications to engage, interact, and participate in daily structured activities with Cleveland's scholars.

Paraprofessionals greeted and monitored students, and enjoyed opportunities to participate in fun summer enrichment programs, such as the Drums and Vibrations curriculum. An example of one of the curriculum prompts, called Daily Provocations, is: does vibration make sound or does sound make vibration?

Thanks to the paras and other educators who worked in CMSD's exciting summer programs and provided extra summer learning opportunities for Cleveland students!

## Election 2022 Campaign Update

From Shauntina Thornton  
CTU Legislative Committee Chair

The CTU will be coordinating with the North Shore AFL-CIO. We'll list all of our events on the Labor 2022 Calendar. Events can be found here: <https://northshoreaflcio.org/events>.

Check your email ACTION NETWORK with more information about election events and other ways to participate.

Want to learn more about the election? There is a great article summarizing the candidates and issues that are on the ballot this fall. You can access it online at the Ohio Capital Journal. Go to their homepage at [ohiocapitaljournal.com](http://ohiocapitaljournal.com) and select the link Politics & Gov. Search Your 2022 Ohio Midterm Election Guide. The August 24, 2022 article by Morgan Trau covers statewide candidates, ballot measures, state legislators, members of Congress, appellate judges, and the voting schedule.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8, 2022. Early voting begins on Wednesday, October 12, 2022. See you soon at one of our campaign activities!

Scan the QR code on the front page of this issue to sign up with CTU today.



Shauntina Thornton, CTU Legislative Chair: "CTU needs two hours of your time before November 8!" Contact her at [sthornton@ctu279.org](mailto:sthornton@ctu279.org) or use the QR code on page 1.

## LABOR DAY PARADE

CTU members display their union pride in the 11th Congressional District Labor Day Parade along Cleveland's Kinsman Avenue, September 5, 2022.



# CTU Kick-Off at FamJam



## AFT Partners with Hungry for Music

The AFT launched a new partnership with the nonprofit Hungry for Music, which distributes new and refurbished musical instruments to kids and school programs in need — similar to what the AFT does with books in its Reading Opens the World campaign. The collaboration began this summer in Cleveland with CTU members at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame's Fam Jam. Pictures of the CTU event are featured with the article on the AFT website.

AFT Secretary-Treasurer Fedrick Ingram got the partnership going. As a professional musician and former high school band director, he grasps the importance of bringing children the joy of music. He also understands the need, because he attended public school in a Miami neighborhood where families like his couldn't always afford to buy or rent musical instruments.

To kick off the new partnership, the Cleveland Teachers Union joined Hungry for Music in a Reading Opens the World event at the annual summer Fam Jam in June. The AFT, in collaboration with longtime partner First Book, provided hundreds of free children's books on musical topics, such as the lives of musicians like Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Elvis Presley, and Mahalia Jackson; Native American music; the history of the blues; and more. The collection included several Spanish-language editions.



Volunteers distributed nearly 400 books in CTU goody bags on a beautiful weekend day, accompanied by a dynamic drum performance by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio and fun activities such as a musical instrument "petting zoo" with instruments young children could touch, hear, and learn about. By the end of the day, Hungry for Music had received a donation of an acoustic guitar destined for an aspiring young rock star, and had distributed drums and other guitars to children in the Boys & Girls Clubs.

At each of these events, the AFT affiliate sets up a booth next to Hungry for Music. AFT members distribute new, music-related children's books, while Hungry for Music both collects donations of musical instruments and distributes new and refurbished instruments to kids in need who have requested them.

Hungry for Music also has a Title I musical instrument program up and running. Through October 15, music teachers, special educators, social workers, and paraprofessionals at Title I schools who work in music or music therapy can request free instruments for children who cannot participate because of financial hardship. The program limits requests to a few instruments per teacher and is already running low on inventory this fall. It sends instruments to Title I schools, after-school music programs, and social workers whose clients would benefit from music therapy.

You can follow Hungry for Music on its website and Facebook. If you have a musical instrument lying around unused, you can donate it through a link in the article on the AFT website. Hungry for Music has a network of professional volunteers who repair instruments and supply parts like picks, bows, strings, and cases.

[Source: Annette Licitra, AFT website]

## Romanian Educators Meet with CMSD School Psychologists, Counselors

by Laura Gabel  
CMSD School Psychologist

CMSD school psychologists and counselors met with a group of Romanian educators at Max Hayes High School on August 17, to share information and resources on working with Ukrainian refugees. The Council of International Programs USA hosted the event.

The Romanian educators and CMSD school psychologists and counselors discussed many topics, including working with refugees, helping students dealing with trauma, and working with bilingual children.

Our CMSD team hopes that this very engaging meeting provided helpful information and ideas for these educators to assist their new Ukrainian students.



# Say Yes! Is Now in Every School

“Every CMSD school is now a Say Yes school,” said Mark Baumgartner, CTU Director of Professional Issues and CTU’s representative on the Board of Directors of the Cleveland Transformation Alliance.

The 2022-2023 school year is the fourth and final year of implementation of Say Yes Cleveland. Say Yes provides tuition gap-closing scholarships to all eligible Cleveland graduates who attend an Ohio public four-year university, two-year college, or eligible trade/certificate program. “While the scholarships are valuable, just as important are the critical supports Say Yes provides,” Mr. Baumgartner asserted, “supports that are essential to ensure student success from pre-K through post-secondary education.”

Say Yes core services include a family support specialist working in each school, after-school and summer learning opportunities, and mental health and pro-bono legal services. The services assist students and their families, too. Say Yes implements a tech-based Postsecondary Planning System, which uses existing data about students to identify their progress and connect them to needed services.

The program unites the many existing entities that are already serving a community’s children to share their data and work together. The collaboration helps the organizations better address students’ individual needs and connect them to additional support services from pre-K through postsecondary graduation.

Mr. Baumgartner credits the

relationship between Say Yes Executive Director Diane Downing and the CTU, especially participating chapter chairs, with improving the Cleveland program’s effectiveness. “Ms. Downing met with chapter chairs when the program was first implemented, and listened to their concerns and frank comments about what was working and what needed improvement. That collaboration and team work laid the foundation for a successful program.”

Six local Cleveland entities are working collaboratively with each other and with Say Yes to provide support services to students: City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cleveland Teachers Union, Cleveland Council of Administrators and Supervisors, and Cleveland Public Library.

The original Say Yes program was founded in 1987 by money manager George Weiss. He promised to prepare 112 Philadelphia sixth graders for college and to pay their college tuition if they graduated high school. In 2008, Say Yes grew to help entire communities make a similar commitment to every public high school student.

Say Yes Cleveland, which launched in January 2019, is the fourth community chapter in the country. The Cleveland rollout plan incorporated 15% of schools in 2019-20, an additional 25% in 2020-21, 30% more in 2021-22, and the remaining 30% in

2022-23.

As Cleveland entered its fourth year with full implementation, the Critique spoke with Diane Downing, Executive Director of Say Yes Cleveland.

**Critique:** What are you most proud of that Say Yes has accomplished in its first three years in Cleveland?

**Diane Downing:** It has been a whirlwind first three years, and even with the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, we are extremely proud that we have completed our planned expansion to 100% of CMSD schools by this school year, putting our services in far more schools, far faster, than any other Say Yes community.

When COVID hit, it was clear that the need for support, intervention, and assistance for our students and their families was only growing larger and more urgent than it had been. We had to keep growing so we could help more students and families, who were facing a significant increase in challenges around mental health, food insecurities, as well as medical and legal assistance.

We are also extremely proud of the fact that this year, with only three classes of CMSD graduates having had access to Say Yes scholarships so far, we have already had 78 graduates from two-year colleges and career training programs, and even four-year colleges and universities. In these first three years, we’ve paid out over \$5 million in Say Yes scholarships.

**Critique:** What are the goals — and needs — of the program as it continues in its fourth (full implementation) year?

**Diane Downing:** This school year, we’re excited to expand into our largest, and last, cohort of new support services schools — more than 30 additional buildings. In just the last three years, we’ve gone from one employee at launch to more than 110 today. That’s a lot of growth, done very quickly, and



a big goal of ours this year is making sure that our support services are as effective in 104 schools as they were in our first 16.

Our goal every year will continue to be steadily increasing the number of CMSD graduates who are enrolling in college or career training, through our scholarship program. Lastly, we will soon launch the final push in our scholarship fundraising campaign; we have \$29 million more to raise to guarantee scholarships for at least the next 25 years of graduates.

**Critique:** Can you comment on the relationship between Say Yes and the Cleveland Teachers Union and CTU educators?

**Diane Downing:** Say Yes Cleveland could never have achieved what we have so far without the support and leadership of CTU and CTU educators. CTU has been a partner from the beginning, playing a critical role in our Operating Committee. Most importantly, CTU educators have taken the lead in completing the Say Yes PPS [Postsecondary Planning System] surveys that allow us to monitor student progress. We will continue to work hard to stay open and receptive to regular feedback from CTU leadership and members, so we can maintain and improve this crucial relationship.

## Social-Emotional Learning

### Restorative Practices Program Expands

The Phase 1 schools in CMSD’s Restorative Practices (RP) program received Day 2 training on September 23. The RP program for educators, from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), is a part of CMSD-CTU’s social-emotional learning plan.

Participants are learning about fundamental theory and practices to foster positive classrooms and school cultures for students, staff, and parents. The program teaches strategies on how to set high expectations while being supportive, how to provide direct feedback and ask questions that foster accountability, and how to use the most effective methods to resolve common conflicts.

Schools who want to participate this school year can apply to be in Phase 2. Chapter chairs and principals got email links to use to apply, if their schools are interested. Participating schools will use two professional days for the training.

“Restorative Practices is a strong program with great potential benefits for our students, staffs, and school communities,” said Jillian Ahrens, CTU Lead on the Joint SEL/Humanware Committee. “It’s a quality, research-based program that can be especially beneficial now, as we all work to recover from the socialization losses after COVID-19.”

For information about IIRP and its programs, go to their website at <https://www.iirp.edu>.



# Protecting Your Dues Money

**Do you know how your CTU dues monies are allocated and dispersed? Who's in charge of CTU funds?**

It's the job of the trustees and the treasurer to handle the union's finances. They are the guardians of all CTU funds, and no bills or expenses are paid without their inspection and approval. The CTU Constitution lists the specific duties of the trustees and treasurer related to CTU finances.

### The Trustees

CTU has five trustees: two K-8 Trustees, one Senior High/Specials Trustee, and two Trustees-at-Large. The K-8 trustees are Cindy Antonio and Bonnie Hedges. The senior/special trustee is Dorothy Fair. These three trustees are elected by members in their respective divisions in even-numbered years.

The two Trustees-at-Large are Mark Baumgartner and Andrea Dockery-Murray. They are elected in odd-numbered years by all CTU members in a city-wide election.

A major part of a trustee's job is to review and approve all payments. Trustees meet to review vouchers for every single CTU expense. At least three of the five trustees must approve a voucher before any payment can be issued. In other words, nothing and no one gets paid until the trustees have given their approval! The current trustees and treasurer are proud of decades of perfect audits of CTU finances, evidence of their fiscal responsibility.

Another important trustee duty is the annual CTU budget. Trustees develop a proposed budget that is discussed at the May Delegate Assembly,

and after discussion, must be approved by chapter chairs and delegates. Once the annual budget is approved, trustees meet with committee chairs during the summer to discuss their proposed programs and allocate the funds that have been appropriated for the committees for the upcoming fiscal year.

### The Treasurer

The CTU Treasurer has specific constitutional duties, too. The Treasurer's responsibilities include: receiving all monies from all sources; issuing receipts; forwarding per capita dues to our affiliated unions; presenting monthly financial reports at meetings; maintaining records for the Auditing Committee; issuing checks based on the approved budget; handling CTU banking; and working with Executive Board and delegate Assembly on investments.

### And More

In addition to their fiduciary work, CTU Trustees and the Treasurer are assigned other duties and responsibilities by the CTU President. Some work on specific programs or serve on joint CTU-CMSD committees, and some assist members with IPDPs and other union issues such as disciplinary hearings.

Ms. Dockery-Murray chairs the Trustee Committee and serves on CMSD's Equity and Inclusion Committee.

"Trustees are the guarantors of the CTU's spending," said Andrea Dockery-Murray. "We verify and certify or

deny donations, invoices, and all payment vouchers. We make sure we do business with union venues and union-owned shops. We deal with monies and members."

Mr. Baumgartner serves as CTU Director of Professional Issues. He was one of the coordinators of CTU's Get Out The Vax (GOTVax) COVID-19 vaccination program, a partnership with the Urban League of Greater Cleveland.

"I am proud to be a trustee, and I appreciate the trust CTU members put in me to keep the finances of the union strong and honest," said Mark Baumgartner. "Every year the budget is balanced and the audit is a success."

Dorothy Fair is the CTU representative for the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) component of CMSD's Humanware committee, and collaborates with SEL initiatives and activities in the district. "In addition to my Trustee duties, I'm proud to work with SEL programs and with the OFT Human Rights Committee," she said. "Both include striving for more equity, diversity, and inclusion in our schools and in society."

After teaching all day at Willson, Bonnie Hedges serves as a member of the District's Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC) and as an IPDP point person for CTU. "I enjoy working with CTU members to help them write IPDPs and get them approved," said Bonnie Hedges. "I also work with Debbie Paden and Jim Wagner on the IPDP approval process. As a K-8 Trustee, I am fiscally responsible for your union dues, a responsibility I take very seriously. I work with

all the trustees to develop the annual budget and ensure that CTU dues are spent properly and wisely."

In addition to her Trustee duties, Cindy Antonio is CTU's point person for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, and serves as Director of Member Mobilization.

"As the former Chairperson of the Salary and Benefits Committee, I know the importance of staying on budget and making sure that CTU members' dues money is being spent appropriately," said Ms. Antonio. "I'm bringing those financial skills to my job as a K-8 Trustee."

Treasurer Jim Wagner was previously a K-8 Trustee and brings that experience and knowledge of CTU finances to the office of Treasurer. He is a member of the Grievance Team, CTU's IPDP help team, CMSD's Equity and Inclusion Committee, and represents CTU members in disciplinary hearings.

"As Treasurer, I represent 4,000 members, and I'm accountable to all of them when it comes to CTU expenses and investments," said Mr. Wagner. "It's a big responsibility, but I'm up for the challenge. My past experience as a trustee has been helpful in the new office."

Without the ongoing work of these six officers, the CTU would not function. And without their integrity as guardians of CTU funds, our union would not be as strong, as powerful, or as fiscally sound.

## Just The Facts: Voting in Ohio in 2022

■ continued from page 1

The best way to ensure your vote is to vote early, either in person or through an absentee ballot. Some people like to wait until Election Day, but stuff happens — vote early. **Early in-person voting begins on October 12.** Every county has an in-person early vote site. Check with your county Board of Elections or at [www.ohiosos.gov](http://www.ohiosos.gov) for information.

You can also request to vote **by mail through an absentee ballot**, by completing the request form available on the website and mailing it to your local Board of Elections. If you want to vote using an absentee ballot, be sure to allow enough time to receive and return it.

**Remember, 2022 brought re-districting and new Congressional, State Legislature, and State School Board districts.** Make sure you know your district and who is on your ballot. You can check your districts at [findmydistrict.ohiosos.gov](http://findmydistrict.ohiosos.gov).

**November 8 is General Election Day.** Polls are open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. If you are in line before polls close, you must be allowed to vote. Know your voting rights.



# CEO Eric Gordon To Resign

**CEO Eric Gordon announced on September 12 that he will resign his position at the end of this school year, after 15 years with CMSD, 11 as CEO.**

His tenure as superintendent — the longest in over 40 years for Cleveland schools — provided much-needed stability for a school system known for revolving-door superintendents. The average tenure of an urban superintendent is less than three years, according to the CMSD News Bureau.

“Though CTU leaders and the membership have had some difficult times with our CEO over his tenure, we have always been able, at the end of the day, to work out our differences and find a

was exemplified during the COVID-19 shut-down, when CTU leadership, as well as rank-and-file members, were brought together with district administration to tackle the enormous challenges we were facing as we moved to virtual learning.

“The CEO’s influence in our community cannot be discounted,” she continued. “He has brought together the civic, business, philanthropic, and labor communities around several issues, including the passage of our

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**The conditions of the district are such that . . . now is the precisely right time to carefully plan for a successful handoff to the next leader of the Cleveland Municipal School District. It’s time to pass the baton.**

*– Eric Gordon, CMSD CEO,*

*at the State of the Schools Address on September 21, 2022*

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path forward,” CTU President Shari Obrenski stated in a message to CTU members following the CEO’s surprise announcement. “One of the reasons that we were able to find our path, is that this CEO listened and provided space for our voices. After our initial understandable friction over The Cleveland Plan, the CEO worked diligently to repair and strengthen the relationship between central office and CTU leadership in the service of our students.”

Mr. Gordon said he felt the timing was right for a smooth transition. CMSD is recovering from the pandemic, a new mayor is in office, public trust in the school system is high, and finances — for decades a major problem in the district leading to state receivership — are in “great shape.” The CTU is in the second year of a three-year contract, ensuring two years of labor peace. And thanks to

much-needed levy in November 2020. Through our cooperation, we were able to rally the community to support our students and our schools with a 20-mill levy, even as we were in the throes of a full-blown pandemic.”

## CMSD’s Academic Gains

Before COVID-19, CMSD’s academic gains were outpacing school districts throughout Ohio and the nation. CMSD graduation rates had improved from 52.2% to 80.9%. The new state report card, released September 15, shows that students struggled during the pandemic, but Cleveland scores are already improving. Some categories have returned to pre-pandemic levels, and overall, CMSD was the highest performing of Ohio’s eight largest urban systems.

Although the graduation rate fell during the pandemic, it had been climbing each year for the past 11 years, setting a new high each year. The four-year graduation rate dropped 6.6 points, from 80.9% to 74.3%, but is expected to climb again as the pandemic wanes.

Two important measures of progress, success in closing achievement gaps and value-added, received four stars on the new report card, meaning that CMSD exceeded expectations in these areas. In the performance index that measures test scores, results returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. Notably, this was achieved despite the fact that CMSD has the highest rate of child poverty in the country.

CMSD was the only member of the Ohio 8 large urban systems to score four stars in gap closing, and CMSD and Toledo were the only districts to receive four stars in value-added.

The CEO gave credit to students, teachers, and families for the academic successes, saying that he asked

teachers to stop “teaching to the test” and instead, challenge students with complex tasks. “When we do really great teaching, the test results will take care of themselves.”

## CMSD Success Recognized

Under Mr. Gordon’s leadership, with collaboration from the CTU, the Cleveland District earned national attention for achieving growth that outpaced other school districts.

A study that the Council of the Great City Schools released in 2021 said urban districts were exceeding expectations when their challenges were taken into account. It called CMSD a “window of opportunity” for students. A 2021 Education Week article included CMSD among a select group of U.S. districts that were beating the odds.

## Not Finished Yet

The CMSD news release announcing his resignation said that CEO Gordon began his tenure on a “one-year, prove-himself contract” and became CMSD’s longest serving superintendent in more than four decades, but he’s not finished yet. “I have always felt honored and privileged to lead this District,” the CEO said. “And I still feel that way. I will give nothing less than my best until the last day.”

President Obrenski said the union will miss his leadership and devotion to Cleveland kids, the schools, and the entire community. “We look forward to working with him in his last year

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**For the first time, CMSD is the highest-rated urban district in Ohio.**

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as our CEO and wish him nothing but the best in his future endeavors.”

She encouraged CTU members that during this school year, when the CEO visits schools (as he will surely continue to do), they take a moment to thank Mr. Gordon for his service and wish him well. Added President Obrenski, “He will be missed.”

## Search for New CEO Begins

In regards to the search for a new CEO, President Obrenski said the CTU will push for a seat at the table. The union will advocate for a new CEO who comes “with an unwavering value for labor’s voice.”

“It is essential that new leadership respects the gains that we have made and the work that we do, each and every day, understanding that CTU members are part of the solution — not the problem.”

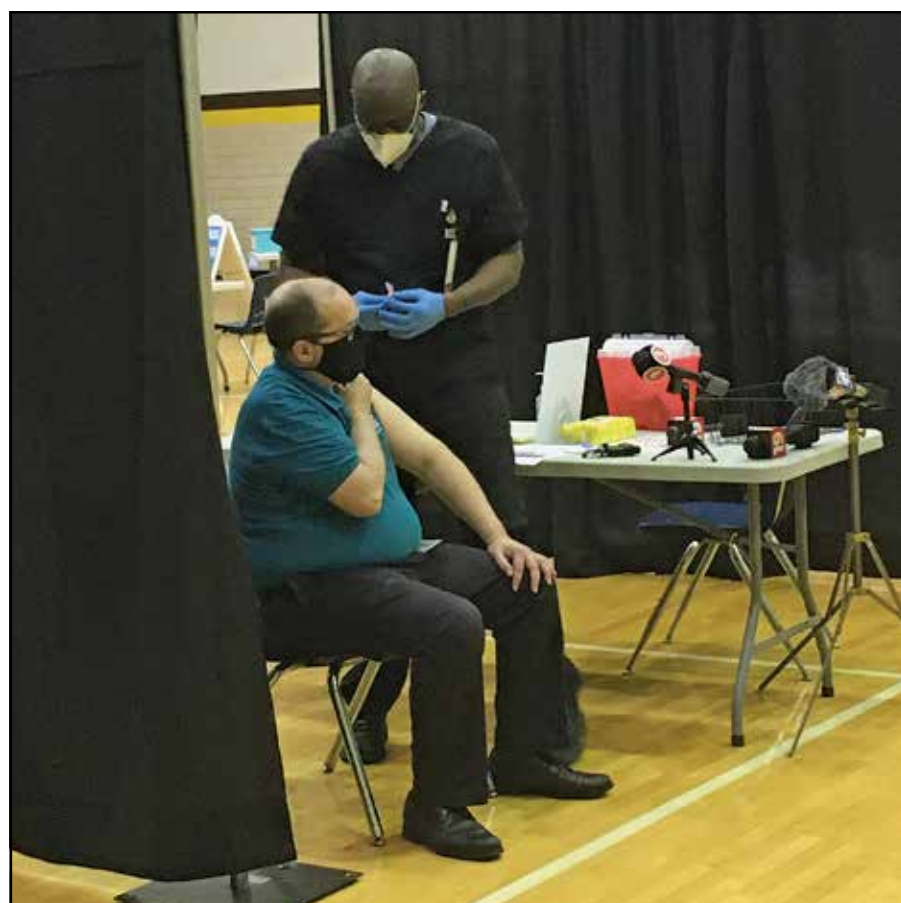
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**The state of our schools in the days to come depends on the investment each and every one of us is willing to make now.**

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CMSD and CTU leadership, management and labor have a good working relationship.

“Over time, the space at the table for CTU has grown larger, with a system-wide emphasis from the CEO on working together to solve problems,” credited President Obrenski. “That



**Leading by example: CEO Eric Gordon, like President Obrenski and other CTU officers, got their first COVID-19 vaccine publicly at a CMSD vaccination site, encouraging staff to get vaxxed so schools could reopen safely.**

## Educators: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?

**“Stressful, frustrating, challenging, overwhelming, yet rewarding.”**

**Those are the most frequent words AFT President Randi Weingarten said she has heard from educators this year as they describe their jobs.**

Teaching, an already hard job, is becoming unsustainable, she stated. The pandemic, combined with political culture wars, has made the last two years the toughest in modern times for educators. And on top of all of that, the unthinkable happened again, when gun violence took the lives of 19 students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas.

“It’s hard not to be stressed when the pandemic has created so much disruption and uncertainty — when you’re trying to give students individualized attention, but your classes are too large, or you are pulled away to cover extra classes or have students added to yours because of the shortages of staff,” she explained. “It’s hard to help children recover from this pandemic when there is a crying lack of school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses to support kids’ well-being. And the pacing calendar and paperwork requirements tend to be more important to the powers-that-be than they are to children’s needs. And then there are the politics. It’s hard not to be stressed when you’re worried that you’ll be fired for teaching the basics” about history and social studies.

Educators have already been dealing with tough situations for years: a lack of professional respect; inadequate support and resources; subpar compensation; untenable student loan debt; and a culture of blame that weaponizes standardized tests to attack public schools and public school teachers, contributing to endless paperwork with little educational value.

“The pandemic only underscored the reality that for a long time, teachers and school staff have lacked the climate, culture, conditions, and compensation to do their jobs,” she asserted. An AFT poll from this year showed that 75% of our teacher members said they would not recommend teaching to young people today. This must change, or America’s educational system will face a catastrophic shortage of qualified teachers.

In a July 2022 report, *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? What America Must Do to Attract and Retain the Educators and School Staff Our Students Need*, AFT leaders from across the country made recommendations on what can be done to alleviate the educator shortage.

CTU President Shari Obrenski served on the task force. “I saw a post on social media that summed up the teacher shortage perfectly. It said that teachers are leaving because the profession has been made unattractive and unsustainable. And things won’t change until these issues are addressed: compensation; micro-management and management through fear; de-professionalism; overwork and

make-work; and the politicization of curriculum.”

The full report is available on the AFT website, [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org).

### Recommendations

The report includes recommendations in four major areas: Revitalize the Educator and School Staff Pipeline; Restructure Schools to Create Positive Working and Learning Conditions for All; Provide Sustainable and Commensurate Compensation and Benefits; and Utilize the Collective Voice and Strength of Our Union to Impact Change at All Levels.

The task force developed recommendations targeted for each area, and the specific actions that should be taken by federal, state, and local governments, school districts, and unions to deal with the educator shortage.

“We were asked to think big and bold on the task force,” said President Obrenski, “to envision student-centered, educator-led schools where dedicated people come to work and want to stay. We also looked at the daily realities facing public educators and students. We thought about how to create schools where teachers want to teach, students want to learn, and parents want to send their children. We thought about what needs to happen to create these schools — and stop the drain of educators from our profession. I encourage everyone to read the report on the AFT website.”

AFT leaders acknowledged that the recommendations constitute a big to-do list. And as there is no single cause

of the teacher and school staff shortage, there will be no one-size-fits-all solution.

“Education is never ‘one sizes fits all,’” President Weingarten stated. “Some of these ideas will work better in some settings than others. The point is, they are all targeted toward giving teachers and school staff the time, trust, tools, training, and compensation they need. Build it and they will come — and stay.”

### CTU Members Weigh In

In the CTU’s Working Conditions survey at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, CTU members confirmed the negative effect staff shortages had on them. Over 700 members, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers, representing 99% of CMSD worksites, responded to the survey.

In response to the statement, “There are enough of the following staff members at my school to get all of the necessary work done,” the percentage responses are as follows:

- **Enough Teachers:** 42% agreed or strongly agreed, 55% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- **Enough Paraprofessionals:** 41% agreed or strongly agreed, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- **Enough Related Service Providers:** 33% agreed or strongly agreed, 55% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- **Enough Mental Health Providers:** 14% agreed or strongly agreed, 82% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- **Enough Security Officers:** 19% agreed or strongly agreed, 79% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

■ **Enough Administrators:** 65% agreed or strongly agreed, 32% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

■ **Enough Custodians:** 48% agreed or strongly agreed, 49% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

■ **Enough Cleaners:** 18% agreed or strongly agreed, 79% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

■ **Enough Clerical Workers:** 59% agreed or strongly agreed, 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

■ **Enough Cafeteria Workers:** 58% agreed or strongly agreed, 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Note: The two numbers may not total 100% because some responders selected “don’t know” as their response.*

In response to another question, in the past month, how often have you felt physically and/or emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day, 79% of respondents said often, 18% said sometimes, and 3% said rarely or never.

Not surprisingly, the survey showed that a shortage of available substitutes led to missed planning time and lunches, which understandably led to the high numbers of reported exhaustion.

### CMSD Staffing Efforts

“Actually, CMSD is doing better than many other urban districts when it comes to staffing shortages,” said President Obrenski. “We are still experiencing shortages in the traditionally hard-to-fill areas of math and science, and some special areas. And we definitely need more substitutes for both teachers and paraprofessionals. But overall, staffing is adequate in most areas. However, if the national shortage continues to get worse, it will



## Stay in Touch!

CTU members are reminded to check their CMSD and personal emails daily. Don't miss an important message or deadline! Members are also encouraged to visit the CTU website regularly at [www.ctu279.org](http://www.ctu279.org) for news, information, important updates, and helpful links. Part of the website is open, but some information is only for current members. To access the restricted part of the website, members must register first and establish a user name and password.

You can share information and ideas with your CTU colleagues on social media. The Union has an open Facebook site for members, friends, and the public. There is also an official closed site only for current CTU members. Look for these groups on Facebook at Cleveland Teachers Union 279 and Official CTU 279 Members. There are Cleveland Teachers Union Pinterest pages too, with lots of ideas for educators.

catch up to CMSD. Recruiting and retaining capable educators needs to be the focus right now."

The district has been working aggressively to fill all open positions. At the City Club State of the Schools address on September 21, CEO Gordon said CMSD schools were almost 99% fully staffed.

### A Silver Lining?

The AFT report claims that despite the problems with school staffing, there is a silver lining. Educators are exhausted and fed up, but by the conditions they work under, **not** the kids they teach and work with, or the vocation of teaching.

A June 2022 Rand Corp. survey on teaching reported: "Many teachers we interviewed (even those who were stressed about their jobs) emphasized that they love teaching. For many of these teachers, it is the context in which they are teaching that is stressful rather than teaching itself."

The study's lead author noted, "Teachers told us that their dedication to working with students kept them in their jobs, even though pandemic conditions have made teaching more challenging. Teaching conditions — not the work of teaching itself — are what they find to be stressful."

In her introductory message in the report, President Weingarten said, "What teachers and school staff are saying is that if conditions change, they will stay. That's because every day, they see it as their mission to come to work and nurture, love, teach and protect our kids..."

"One thing is certain: act, we must. We can no longer hope that things will get better. That's why this report is called *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow*? We can no longer just hope the desire and commitment of educators to make a difference in young people's lives will overcome all the challenges."

[Source: AFT website and CTU Working Conditions Survey]

## CDHR Committee

# Don't Miss These PD Opportunities!

**"Be sure to register for the informative Professional Development sessions presented by the Civil, Democratic, and Human Rights Committee!"**  
**Stephanie Henderson, CDHR Chairperson and Member-at-Large, K-8, reminded members.**

The popular sessions cover timely, thought-provoking topics of interest to

educators. You may be able to use the PD hours for Voluntary Professional Development (VPD) time or CEUs depending on your school's AAP and UCC agreement. This varies from school to school.

Session times are 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. They will be presented on the Zoom platform and also in person at East Professional Center.

In order to attend, you must regis-

ter online in advance through PowerSchool Professional Learning at [ClevelandMetroSchools.org](http://ClevelandMetroSchools.org). Registration is limited. Raffles are held at the end of each session; winners must be "present" at the Zoom session or in person to win.

The Committee is finalizing topics and speakers for the monthly sessions. Look for information on the CTU website and in emails sent to Chapter Chairs each month, so you can get your registration request in on time to guarantee your spot!

The dates for the 2022-2023 CDHR sessions are:

Wednesday, October 19, 2022  
Wednesday, November 9, 2022  
Wednesday, December 14, 2022  
Wednesday, January 11, 2023  
Tuesday, February 7, 2023  
Wednesday, March 8, 2023  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023  
Wednesday, May 10, 2023

**You may not be aware of every benefit the union provides for you, or every right the union protects for you, until the day you lose them.**

**You may not understand the importance and influence of a strong, powerful union in your professional life, until the day it is weakened.**

**You may not think you personally need a union to protect you, represent you, and stand by you, until the day you do.**

# THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY SHARI OBRENSKI

## 2022: Determining Our Future

■ continued from page 16

absentee. And vote for our endorsed candidates. The list is available on the OFT and CTU websites. Why have these candidates been endorsed? Because they share our values. Because they will help move our nation forward, not backward. Because they will protect civil rights, public education, voting rights, working people, the

are coming from.

In this election, it's not about D or R, it's about right or wrong. Our democracy is at stake in this election. We must be the change we want to see.

### CEO Gordon to Resign

CEO Eric Gordon announced that he will be resigning at the end of this school year, saying that the timing felt right. Although we haven't always

**As the people who actually do the teaching, CTU members' voices are important and we need to be heard.**

middle class.

Second, **TALK** to family and friends and ask them to vote for our candidates. Explain why it's important that these candidates are elected.

Third, **PARTICIPATE** in CTU campaign activities. When you are asked to phone bank, canvass, or labor walk, just do it!

During the pandemic, educators were heralded as heroes for doing our jobs. Now, according to some politicians, once again we are the scapegoats for many of society's problems. In Ohio, we don't have to look too far [hint: the supermajority in Ohio's executive and legislative branches] to see where the recent attacks on educators

seen eye to eye, as is to be expected in labor-management relationships, we will miss his leadership skills, his care for our students, and his genuine inclusion of CTU members as educational partners.

We have worked hard during his 15 years as Chief Academic officer and then CEO, to develop a successful collaborative working relationship based on mutual respect and honest communication. That takes time and effort on both sides.

But the rewards of that educational partnership have been positive: CMSD has made significant academic progress, and has been recognized as the highest performing of Ohio's



eight urban systems. This was accomplished by lots of hard work from CTU members and other CMSD employees, and students and families, and in spite of the fact that CMSD has the highest rate of child poverty in the country. Kudos to all!

In the search for a new CEO, CTU must be at the table. As the people who actually do the teaching, CTU members' voices are important and we need to be heard. This is essential for continued progress in the district.

We wish CEO Gordon much success wherever he goes. He will be missed.

### Let's Make It a Great Year!

Welcome back to our veteran educators, and welcome to those new to CMSD! We are all part of a strong, proud union and a talented group of skilled professional educators. Let's do what we can to support each other and work together to make this a great school year. Thank you for all you for Cleveland's children and for the Cleveland Teachers Union.

In union,

*Shari Obrenski*

CTU President



# THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY SHARI OBRENSKI

## 2022: Determining Our Future

The 2022-2023 school year is barely a month old as I'm writing this report, and it's difficult to sum up all that has happened in just the past few weeks (whew!) and what the next weeks have in store for CTU educators.

### Teacher and Staff Shortages

A lack of substitute teachers was an issue in every school last year, and in districts across the country. The CTU survey at the end of last school year found the lack of substitutes led to cascading problems, including exhaustion, burnout, and mental health issues. It created very difficult situations for CTU members who regularly lost planning time and lunch periods

We must be the change we want to see.

and covered extra classes.

The good news this year is CMSD is at a staffing rate of about 99% for regular positions, so not as many substitutes will be pulled from the sub pool to fill open positions. We are optimistic that the substitute situation has improved, and we will continue to monitor it.

Our staffing problems are not unique, and it's not hard to figure out why fewer young people are going into education overall. I believe it boils down to two things, compensation and respect. Other professions can offer higher pay and less stress for the same level of college studies. However, most teachers don't go into the profession for the money, although we expect to make a fair living wage and have a

decent retirement.

Respect — or lack of it — is a major factor in why teachers are leaving and why there are fewer replacements. We educators wear many hats as we do our jobs: teachers, social workers, standardized test gurus, healthcare providers, guidance counselors, and now, defenders.

When the pandemic hit, it exposed all the problems that existed in education. Educators kept doing their jobs, even as more and more was put on our plates, and nothing was removed.

Then, to make things even more difficult, we have to deal with meddling from lawmakers who know nothing about teaching and don't want to hear our voices.

That's what's really important to us: having our voices heard and valued in the decision-making process. We want to be part of the solution instead of being ignored and condemned as part of the problem. How can we change this situation? Keep reading...

### Which Way for Ohio and the Nation?

The 2022 midterm elections are only weeks away now, and early voting begins October 12. I know you have

heard it before: "This election is the most important one."

But as we have all experienced (especially in the last six years), elections really do have consequences, for better or worse. Our votes and our activism do make a difference. And the most important election really is the upcoming election, because that election will determine the immediate future course of our communities, our state, and our nation.

We are experiencing a nationwide teacher shortage. It was exacerbated

Hope is not a strategy. We need effective strategies and deliberate actions now, to protect our profession, our future, and our democracy.

by the pandemic, but it didn't begin then. It has been getting worse for years, as societal problems, intrusive politics, and onerous laws have made the profession of teaching more and more difficult.

The choices are clear. Do you want legislators who support public schools, who will vote to fully fund them, and who will provide the services needed for every child to succeed? Or do you want legislators who will give more public tax dollars to private schools, who want to limit the power of unions and take away educators' voices?

We are on the precipice — we must



take a stand for ourselves, for our profession, and for our students and their families. Or we can sit back and allow those who want to destroy us to succeed.

In November, we have a real opportunity to move our state and our

nation in a good direction, to support democracy, inclusion, and progress. I am hopeful about the future. Hope is a good quality.

**However, hope is not a strategy. We need effective strategies and deliberate actions now, to protect our profession, our future, and our democracy. We need your help.**

What can CTU members do? First, **VOTE**. Vote early, if possible. Stuff happens. Make sure your vote counts by voting early, either in person or by

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### THE CRITIQUE

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**AFTCA**  
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Would you like President Obrenski to visit your class? President Shari Obrenski is once again encouraging members to request a classroom/worksite visit this school year. Requests can include reading to your students, participating in demonstration of learning, being a guest speaker, eating lunch with members at your worksite, attending a special event, or in some other way participating with you in your work. While she can't promise that she can fulfill every visit request, she will certainly get to as many as her schedule will allow. Scan this QR code to request a visit!

